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THE THOMSONIAN SYSTEM

OF THE

PRACTICE OF MEDICINE,

ON

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THE
MEDICAL ADVOCATE.

VOL. I.]

BOSTON, JUNE, 1827.

[No. 3.]

PERNICIOUS EFFECTS OF MERCURY.

To guard the public against the evils and often fatal consequences of using this dangerous article as medicine, is an object of the greatest solicitude on our part, and will at all times be attended to in our labours to give correct information on the subject of curing disease, or preventing what is a greater evil than the disease itself, the consequences that arise from such a dangerous practice. The following extracts are taken from the writings of James Hamilton, M. D. Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and Professor of Midwifery in the University of Edinburgh.

“Among the numerous poisons which have been used for the cure or alleviation of diseases, there are few which possess more active, and of course more dangerous powers than *mercury*. Even the simplest and mildest forms of that mineral exert a most extensive influence over the human frame, and many of its chemical preparations are so deleterious, that in the smallest doses they speedily destroy life.

“Practitioners of the first respectability prescribe on every trifling occasion calomel, or the blue pill. Thus, calomel is now almost the universal opening medicine recommended for infants and children, and a course of the blue pill, (which is one of the mildest preparations of mercury) is advised, without any discrimination, for the cure of trifling irregularities of digestion in grown persons.

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“Dr. Falconar of Bath, (in a paper inserted in the first volume of the Transactions of the Medical Society of London, dated May, 1809,) has in strong language reprobated this practice, and has pointed out many of the dangerous effects of the indiscriminate use of mercury. His warning voice, however, has not been listened to; for the employment of mercurial medicines has, for several years, become more and more extensive.

“In detailing the changes produced upon the system by preparations of mercury, it is necessary to premise the well known fact, that there are some individuals on whom such medicines, though continued for a considerable length of time, have little or no perceptible influence, unless the activity of their form, or the magnitude of their dose, be calculated to excite immediate effects. For example, whatever the constitution of the person may be, a very few grains of the muriate of mercury given in substance, prove rapidly fatal, and large doses of the submuriate are quickly followed by vomiting and purging. On the other hand, instances of constitutions which are unsusceptible of the influence of the ordinary doses and preparations of mercury, are very few in comparison with those which are affected by the smallest quantity of that mineral.

“Preparations of mercury, exhibited either internally or externally for any length of time, increase in general the action of the heart and arteries, and produce salivation, followed by emaciation and debility, with an extremely irritable state of the whole system.

“These effects of mercury are expressly mentioned, or virtually admitted, by every author, ancient and modern, who has directed its use; and it must appear very extraordinary, that their full influence should have been misunderstood, or at least not sufficiently regarded.

“The first effect enumerated, is an increased action of the heart and arteries, that is, a more than usually



rapid circulation of the blood through every part of the body. This also occurs in feverish and inflammatory disorders, and in all is accompanied with an augmentation of the animal heat. But in feverish disorders there is neither any apparent change upon the sensible qualities of the blood, nor any unusual flow of the ordinary secretions; while in inflammatory affections, the sensible qualities of the blood are materially altered, and either some of the secretions are furnished in greater abundance, or topical congestions, that is, obstructions in the vessels of particular parts, take place.

“Accelerated circulation of the blood, in consequence of the use of mercury, is attended with the most obvious of the circumstances which arise from inflammation. Blood drawn from the arm of the most delicate and debilitated individual, subjected to a course of mercurial medicines, exhibits the same buffy crust with blood drawn from a person labouring under pleurisy, and the secretions from the skin or from the kidneys are greatly increased.

“Reasoning upon the subject, it might be concluded, that if there be an inordinate action of the heart and arteries, attended with an altered state of the blood and with debility, while the increased secretions accompanying this inordinate action, have no tendency to allay it, the health must be rapidly undermined; and if there be ulcerations in any part of the body, they must as certainly degenerate into malignant sores, as blistered surfaces or scarifications mortify in cases where the living powers are much exhausted.

“Experience has proved the reality of such conclusions, but prejudice and inaccurate observation led many practitioners of deserved reputation to attribute those effects of mercury to other causes, till Mr. Mathias published his valuable remarks on what he terms the mercurial disease. Thus, before Mr. Mathias’ publication, the injurious effects of mercury in some

syphilitic cases were attributed to the original virus operating on scrofulus, or cancerous, or scorbutic constitutions, or to some complication or anomaly which was inexplicable.

“Mr. Mathias has unequivocally shown, that certain dangerous changes upon ulcerations originally syphilitic, and certain derangements of health, occur whenever mercury has been administered in too acrid a form, or in too large a quantity; and his remarks are confirmed by the experience of every practitioner who has, with extensive opportunities of observation, been attentive to the phenomena. He imagines that the action of the mercury in such cases is of a specific or a peculiar nature; it more probably, however, is merely in an inordinate or excessive degree, and in no other respect different from what is in every case. It is a well known fact, that exposure to cold, bodily fatigue, and irregularities of diet, particularly indulgence in intoxicating liquors, have aggravated the severity and malignancy of syphilitic ulcerations, whether primary or secondary. But as all those different causes concur only in one respect, viz. in exciting inflammation, it is evident that mercury, when it affects the system, must be productive of equally injurious changes upon the ulcerations in question and upon the general health, because it probably induces a more violent degree of inflammation, than exposure to cold or irregularities of diet.

“Among the anomalous complaints arising from this cause, may be enumerated, impaired or capricious appetite for food, with all the ordinary symptoms of indigestion, particularly retchings in the morning, and flatulency—disturbed sleep, with frightful dreams—impaired or depraved vision—frequent aches and pains in different parts of the body—occasionally such sudden failure of strength, as if just dying, and at other times violent palpitations at the heart, accompanied with difficulty of breathing. Along with all these

complaints, there is such a wretchedness of look, with such a propensity to brood over their miserable feelings, that it is extremely difficult to persuade the relations or attendants of the patient that there is no serious indisposition. Indeed medical practitioners, who are not accustomed to weigh with mature deliberation all the complications of symptoms, are generally deceived in such cases, and involuntarily add to the alarm, both of the unhappy sufferer and of the attendants.

“I might cite all writers on the *Materia Medica*,” Doctor Falconar says, “for authorities that the long continued and frequent use of mercury is not free from danger; that among other ill effects, it tends to produce tremors and paralysis, and not unfrequently incurable mania. I have myself seen repeatedly, from this cause, a kind of approximation to these maladies, that embittered life to such a degree, with a shocking depression of spirits, and other nervous agitations with which it was accompanied, as to make it more than commonly probable, that many of the suicides, which disgrace our country, were occasioned by the intolerable feelings that result from such a state of the nervous system.” To the truth of these remarks every unprejudiced physician who has been in extensive practice must bear testimony.

“Such are the ordinary and well known effects of mercury when given in sufficient quantity to act upon the human body—but in many cases other deviations from health ensue.

“Of these, the most common are excessive diarrhœa, accompanied often with discharges of blood from the bowels. This is so apt to occur in some individuals, even though the mercury be administered by being rubbed upon the surface, that every writer upon lues venerea has mentioned this effect as one of the great obstacles to the cure of the disease.

“The random experiments of speculative physicians

upon patients labouring under scrofulous affections have proved, that in some cases ulcerations of the soft parts, and caries of the bones, originally arising from ill conditioned states of the system, are much accelerated in their progress by mercurial medicines. Of this many melancholy examples might be cited.— A boy about eleven years old had a sore on one cheek, with an affection of the jaw, which were attributed to the mismanagement of a dentist in extracting a carious tooth. A physician was consulted, (after the patient had suffered for some months) who immediately prescribed a regular and full course of mercury. In a short time ulcerations in the throat appeared, the nose sunk, and one of the eyes was nearly destroyed, while the general health became so seriously injured, that death followed in a few months. Can it be for a moment doubted, that all those morbid changes proceeded from the inflammatory action of the mercury.

“Mental derangement, with eventual fatuity, has sometimes followed a course of mercury; and the probable reason why it does not do so more frequently, is, that the irritable state of mind which usually precedes actual derangement, commonly alarms the attendants, and leads to active precautionary measures.

“These morbid effects of mercury do not seem to depend entirely upon the quantity or mode of preparation of that medicine which may be administered to the individual, for while it is an established fact, that the mildest preparations employed externally, if exhibited in too large doses, or continued for too great a length of time, are followed by some of the bad effects above enumerated, it is also notorious, that very small quantities of mercury have suddenly proved equally injurious. Thus, in a lady (whom the author attended some years ago along with his intelligent friend Dr. Farquharson) who had such small doses of the blue pill, combined with opium, for three nights successively, that the whole quantity amounted to no

more than five grains of the mass, salivation began on the fifth day, and notwithstanding every attention, the tongue and gums became swelled to an enormous degree, bleeding ulcers of the mouth and fauces took place, and such excessive irritability and debility followed, that for nearly a whole month her life was in the utmost jeopardy. Every practitioner must have met with similar cases.

“Another common consequence of a very small dose of mercury, is an excessive bowel complaint. In many individuals a permanent irritability of the stomach and intestinal canal has followed the accidental exhibition of a few grains of calomel.

“Various other anomalous affections have been known to succeed the use of mercury. Thus, Dr. Falconar mentions, (*Memoirs of the Medical Society of London*, Vol. III. page 381) that he once saw a dropsy of the breast produced by the use of a mercurial remedy for a redness in the face, which it effectually removed, but instantly produced a dropsy of the chest, terminating in death. Dr. Blackall has recorded similar cases.

“In his observations on the hydrargyria, page 40, Dr. Alley asserts, that he had seen “that eruption appear over the entire body of a boy about seven years old, for whom but three grains of calomel had been prescribed ineffectually as a purgative.

“Many other instances of violent effects from a small dose of mercury might be cited. Besides, the following seems to prove, that mercury may remain inert for a considerable time in the habit, and afterwards, by some inexplicable circumstance, may become active.

“A lady, the mother of four children, in the twenty-eighth year of her age, had a bad miscarriage at the end of the fourth month. When the author was called, she was very much reduced from the loss of blood, and required the ordinary palliative remedies. Three

days after the first visit she complained of a bad taste in her mouth, with soreness of her gums, and on the following day salivation took place. On inquiring into the circumstances of her previous history, it was learned, that four years before, she had had for a fortnight a course of the blue pill, which had only slightly touched the gums, and it was solemnly asserted, that she had never again taken any preparation of mercury, and had been in general good health.

“The salivation was therefore at first attributed to some accidental cause, but when it was found to be proceeding with great violence, the medicines which the lady had been taking for the palliation of the complaints produced by the abortion, were carefully analyzed, from a suspicion that some mercurial preparation might have been mixed with them, but it turned out that they contained no mercury. The most anxious and unremitting attention, and the careful exhibition of all the ordinary remedies, which have been employed in similar cases, proved unavailing. The salivation, with the usual consequences of excessive emaciation, debility, and irritability, continued for above twelve months. Occasionally for a day or two it was checked, but alarming vomiting, with threatening sinking of the living powers, supervened.

“It is universally acknowledged, that although the morbid effects of mercury may be induced very suddenly, and by very small quantities of the medicine, in certain constitutions, there are no marks by which such peculiarities of habit can be distinguished, and there is no method of arresting their progress.

A remarkable Vision, seen in the Nineteenth Century, and published for the benefit of all who believe it a reality, by Samuel Thomson.

While in silent repose upon my bed, my mind was greatly agitated by a voice, which, in my dream, I heard saying, ‘Poor wretched inhabitants of a free

country! and I thought myself awake, and said, what is the cause of their wretchedness? As I spake, turning my eyes, I saw by my bed-side, a man clothed in a long white garment. I thought I said to him, who are you? He replied, 'I am *Deception*.' I then said, why do you give yourself this odious name? He replied, 'White denotes Purity, Innocence, and a Promoter of Health.'

I then asked him what he was in reality; his reply was, 'I am *Death* under the name of *Life*; or *Evil* under the name of *Good*.' I then asked him to appear to me without any cover or disguise; this he did, by throwing off his white robe; all under that was blackness and darkness. I then asked him what he represented; he said 'DEATH! and many of my victims you have known, and others you have lately heard of, and will continue to hear of them, especially among such as are with child or give suck in these days. Many of this class have I destroyed with my deadly weapons, some within a few days or hours.'

After hearing all this, I asked him if he was a reality or not. He replied 'I am only the representative of many.' This led me to enquire what he represented; to which he replied, I shall call no names,' and then showed me two leather bags, and said, 'These, and what is inscribed on them, will teach you why I am *Death* under the name of *Life*, and why I kill under the name of preserving life.' I then asked him what he meant by that inscription; he replied, I mean those deadly weapons contained in the bags—the names of which are, according to the best of my recollection, ARSENIC, MERCURY, OPIUM, NITRE, LANCET and KNIFE.

He then added—'these instruments of death are used under the pretence of curing diseases, or promoting life; and the men who use them you know have been the cause of those who were so suddenly taken from their friends and all they held dear on earth.'

Having heard all this, I asked him why he revealed this secret to me and not to another? he replied, 'because I know you are able to write the particulars which are related to you. He added—'do not fail to publish what I have related—not only in this town, but in every direction; for this business of killing (under the name of healing) has gone far, and going farther; for many have great wrath because they fear their time is short. Every thing which has been done here and in other places adapted to relieve the sick with the medicine of our own country (which the God of nature has so bountifully furnished) all these things have been despised, and those who kill others cry *Poison! Poison! Kill! Kill!*'

I asked him why they cried out in this manner when so few died who used the medicine of our own country, and when so many fell under their deadly weapons? He replied, 'you remember what I first stated; they will talk of pity, if one is likely to be cured, that they may kill him themselves. It is not strange for the eagle to cry *death* to birds when the dove is among them, though he would gladly devour the dove with the other birds were it in his power.'

In my dream I thought the one who spake to me said, 'I enjoin it on you to direct the people of this country to keep in their libraries and reading rooms, three books* in use among those who use deadly weapons: viz. *The NEW AMERICAN DISPENSATORY—The MEDICAL DICTIONARY—and MEDICAL POCKET-BOOK.* Lest you or any other may not happen to find what is said in the Dispensatory concerning these deadly weapons, I now repeat to you a few words written there. He then handed me the following: page 285—of *Nitre*, it is said, '*This powerful salt, when inadvertently taken in too large quantities, is one of the most*

*The first book shows how to prepare medicine; the second explains the dead languages; the third directs how much medicine or poison to give.

fatal poisons. Page 288, *Oxid of arsenic is one of the most sudden and violent poisons we are acquainted with.* The lancet we know the use of, and also mercury, which is called medicine, though poisonous.

As these things are so, how can people expect to be profitted by such articles as are acknowledged the most deadly poison, though used as medicine in the most difficult cases? After quoting these things from the Dispensatory, and making the above remarks, I thought that he said, 'do not fail to put them in mind of this important question; *What will become of your souls another day?* You must die as well as other men, and how can you answer for the lives of those poor people who have died in consequence of taking poison from your hands, under the name of healing medicine; while you have despised the medicines which might have relieved them; and especially when you did it for filthy lucre?'—When he had said these words he vanished, and I awoke, and behold it was a dream.

Fearing I might forget these things, I arose immediately, and wrote down the vision according to my recollection; and, as soon as possible, found the books mentioned, and to my great astonishment, found every word in the Dispensatory which had been related to me.

The dream, and what I found in the Dispensatory caused me some serious reflections in my mind. I said thus with myself: If *arsenic, mercury* and *nitre*, are in their nature poison, can they in the hands of a physician, be medicine? If, when taken by accident, these things kill; will they cure when given designedly? Does not mercury go to the same part of the man when taken by accident as when given by the doctor? Surely it does: of course it will be poison, and injurious whenever it is taken.

These things are communicated to the public, that they may judge of them according to the evidence given of their being true or not.

The Secret of curing Diseases, and the only method of establishing a better System of Physic. By Dr. WILLIAM HILLARY.

ACCURATELY observing all the motions, endeavours, and indications of *nature* to carry off and cure diseases; and by observing by what *critical evacuations* she does at last cast off *morbid matter* which caused them, and so restores health, we may, by the same method of reasoning, both know the methods and means we should use to assist *nature* to produce those salutiferous effects, if we avoid all *hypothetical reasoning*; and by thus observing, following, and assisting *nature* agreeably to her indications, our practice will always be both more satisfactory and successful. For although *nature* does not act as an intelligent being, yet so most wisely and wonderfully is the human body formed, that whenever any noxious matter is got into it, that would be injurious or destructive to it, we may observe that it so irritates, stimulates, and offends *nature*, that *she* always exerts *her* power, or the *vis vitæ*, and acts with great regularity, order, and uniformity in *her* endeavouring to cast that offending matter out of the body, and thereby in carrying off the disease, and so restoring health, and preserving life.

And seeing that in thus observing, investigating, and truly knowing diseases, and their causes; and from thence, by just reasoning and observing, knowing how and when to assist *nature*, according to *her* indications and endeavours, is contained the chief part of medical knowledge, and the true scientific principles of the medical art. Let us therefore, for the love of truth, and the desire of doing good to mankind, diligently pursue these methods, and endeavour to improve them every way still further; as they are the only methods by which all true medicinal knowledge has been obtained, and the only means by which the medical art has been improved in all ages. And let us carefully avoid falling into the method of forming imagi-

nary hypothesis, and reasoning from any suppositious and false data, either in our *theory*, or in our *practice*: seeing that doing so, has not only led many ingenious and learned physicians into various errors and mistakes, but has diverted them from pursuing those methods by which they might have further improved medical knowledge: and let us carefully apply our inductive mechanical reasoning when and where, and only when and where we can apply it to certain and true data, obtained by accurate observations and clear experiments, founded upon certain and well known facts, both in our theory and practice: and not vainly attempt to account for and explain the operations and effects of medicines, by reasoning from the supposed figures, structure, and size, or cohesion of the constituent elementary particles of different medicines, as some have vainly attempted to do, but always without success, since we neither do, nor can know that by those means; because the operation and effects of medicines can be only truly known by observation and experience; therefore such reasoning should have no place in our practice, though it has when and how to apply such medicines, whose effects are known.

“Therefore let us diligently apply accurate observations, judicious experiments, and just inductive mechanical reasoning, founded on real facts, in investigating the true causes of diseases, and the manner of their being produced; also in observing *nature*, and her indications, and learn of her, to know by *just reasoning*, when and how we may and should assist her to carry off and cure diseases; and thus we may reasonably hope to render the *theory* and *practice of physic* beneficial to mankind.

“But says Lieutaud, I have often inculcated, for those who are seeking popularity, always to refer the happy termination of a disorder to any, even the most preposterous remedy; for no one is ignorant that

many patients overcome both the disease and the incongruous method of cure by the power of nature alone."

The Craft in danger.

It has at all times been a grand object with a certain class of men, who maintain their superiority not by their usefulness, but by keeping up appearances that tend to divert the people from enquiring into what is their true interest, to propagate and give currency to all such hints and dark insinuations as will prejudice the public mind against those they wish to destroy. If they were to investigate and publish to the world the facts, the people would be able to see through the veil of deception, and are capable of judging for themselves. When the truth is known, it produces conviction on the mind, and there can be no prejudice; for every action of our lives is either right or wrong, and each individual is answerable for all the good or harm he does. If he promotes the comfort and happiness of his fellow-creatures, he will be rewarded not only in the approval of his own conscience, but by the gratitude of all honest men. If on the other hand he knowingly pursues a course that increases the sum of human misery, by causing or prolonging pain and sickness, he deserves the severest punishment, and the execration of mankind.

The foregoing reflections arose from reading in the newspapers a short paragraph concerning the Thomsonian practice in the state of New-York; where the practice is generally adopted by the people as soon as they become acquainted with it; and hundreds have been cured when all other remedies had failed. Many hundred families have purchased the right and information to enable them to relieve themselves from sickness, without risk and with little expense. This has, however, very much lessened the importance and profits of the regular doctors; and how far this circum-

stance has caused the publication of certain false and ridiculous reports about the practice, we shall leave for the public to judge. We copy the article alluded to as a specimen of the course adopted to run down the practice and produce a prejudice in the minds of the people against it; which will be followed with some remarks to show how far the statements can be relied on, in point of truth.

“The Geneva N. Y. Palladium mentions that the notorious quack doctor Thompson, and his followers, are still going on in their absurd and dangerous career. They are practising in that and the adjacent counties, with very considerable fatality. Their cure for complaints of the eyes is an extract of red pepper, or in cases of much inflammation, pulverized pepper, blown into the eyes dry, with a goose quill.”

It is a well known fact, that Dr. Thomson has not practised any for five years past; and that he has not been in the State of New-York, except in passing through on business. In consequence of age, and the injury done his constitution by the hardships he has undergone, and his sufferings from persecution, he has been obliged to quit the practice altogether; but being desirous to be useful as far as in his power, he has and is now endeavouring to give the people a correct knowledge of his experience in curing disease, with the powers and properties of such vegetables as he has found to be useful and safe. This must of course be principally done through agents appointed for that purpose. That some of these, or those to whom they have communicated the knowledge, may have made mistakes for want of correct information, and even done harm in some instances, is neither strange nor improbable; but that such treatment as described in the above statement, was ever practised or recommended by Dr. Thomson, is well known to all who have correct knowledge on the subject, to be utterly without foundation.

That Capsicum, or Cayenne, and the red pepper of this country, is used and recommended by Dr. Thom-

son as an important article in his system of practice, is what we are very ready to admit; and we defy the faculty to produce one instance, where an injury has been caused by its use. The extreme pungency of this article, and the burning sensation produced on the glands of the mouth, has been the cause of their saying so much about its dangerous effects, in order to prejudice the people against the practice. To test their sincerity, and give our readers a fair view of the subject, we shall publish the following extracts from the Edinburgh New Dispensatory, under the head Capsicum Annuum, Cock-spur, or Bird Pepper, [*when ground and offered for sale called Cayenne*;] an authority we presume the faculty will not dispute.

After giving a description of the article, the writer says, "These peppers have been chiefly used as a condiment, [*seasoning sauce*.] They prevent flatulence from vegetable food, and have a warm and kindly effect in the stomach, possessing all the virtues of the oriental spices, without, according to Dr. Wright, producing those complaints of the head which the latter are apt to occasion. But of late they have been employed also in the practice of medicine. There can be little doubt that they furnish us with one of the purest and strongest stimulents which can be introduced into the stomach; while at the same time they have nothing of the narcotic effects of ardent spirit. Dr. Adair Makinrick, who was perhaps the first that employed them as a medicine, directs their being given to the extent of six or eight grains under the form of pills, or under the form of tincture made by infusing half an ounce in a pound of rectified spirit, and giving of this from one to three drachms diluted for a dose. He has found them useful in a variety of affections, particularly in that morbid disposition which he calls the Cachexia Africana, [*African fever*,] and which he considers as a most frequent and fatal predisposition to disease among the slaves."

“ Dr. Wright says, that in dropsical and other complaints, where chalybeates are indicated, [*poisoned by preparations of iron,*] a minute portion of powdered capsicum forms an excellent addition, and recommends its use in lethargic affections. This pepper has also been successfully employed in a species of cynanche maligna, [*malignant sore throat,*] which proved very fatal in the West Indies, resisting the use of Peruvian bark, wine, and the other remedies commonly employed.”

“ In tropical fevers, coma and delirium are common attendants ; and in such cases, cataplasms of capsicum have a speedy and happy effect. In ophthalmia from relaxation, [*disease of the eyes,*] the diluted juice of capsicum is a sovereign remedy.”

VEGETABLE MEDICINE.

In order to communicate such information on this subject as shall be useful in curing or preventing disease, it will be necessary to give a general view of the principles by which we must be governed, to ensure success. According to Dr. Thomson's plan, all the vegetable substances that are useful in curing disease, may be classed under three heads, in which is contained the whole Materia Medica ; that is, what he calls *hot, rough and bitter*—the more fashionable terms used by the doctors are *stimulent, astringent and tonic*. The first raises the inward or vital heat, and promotes a natural and free circulation ; the second removes the canker, which is the cause of all soreness ; the third restores the digestive powers, so that the stomach will digest the food taken into it, without which there can be no solid nourishment to support the system.

There are innumerable articles to be found in the vegetable kingdom, that are applicable to some one or the whole of these objects. All the skill necessary to cure disease, is to know the cause and those articles best calculated to remove it. The primary cause

of all disease, is cold overpowering the inward, or vital heat, which is nature, and thereby causes obstructions. These obstructions produce pain and will continue until removed by either natural or artificial means. In the first stages this may be done by almost any thing of a stimulating nature, sufficiently powerful to cause perspiration; but when this is neglected, and nature is not sufficient to restore itself, there will be in all cases more or less canker, which will be followed by a derangement of the digestive powers, so that the food taken into the stomach will afford little or no nourishment. This is what we call a settled disease, and cannot be removed without resort to all three of our grand principles—to raise the inward heat, remove the canker and restore the digesture.

To give any thing like a satisfactory description of all those vegetables that have been found useful in curing disease would be impossible. A correct knowledge of them can only be obtained by experience. We shall therefore confine ourselves to such only as have been found by this test, to be the best calculated to effect the desired end agreeably to the plan we have laid down; leaving it to those who take an interest in the cause, to gain knowledge by their own experience, which can be easily and safely done, by keeping in view the principles we have given as a foundation; and observing the rules we shall give for their direction. Any knowledge thus gained of the medical properties of the vegetables of our country, will be attended to if communicated, and laid before the public; by which means a fund of useful information may be preserved.

Dr. Thomson has given us a rule, by which he says he has governed himself through all his practice, to ascertain the medicinal powers of vegetables, and has always found it correct: that is, to chew some of the article, and if it causes the saliva to flow freely, and leaves the mouth clean and moist, it is good; but

if it dries the juices, and leaves the mouth rough and dry, it is bad. By the help of this test he has been enabled at all times, in whatever place he happened to be, to find some article that would have the desired effect. This is a very useful and important discovery, for it puts it in the power of any one who is desirous of gaining knowledge by experience to make himself useful in curing disease, by the use of simples which will be always safe.

By the sense of tasting we are less liable to be deceived than by either of the other senses; and the glands of the mouth are extremely susceptible of ascertaining the quality of any substance communicated to them. All such articles as are of a stimulating nature are easily known by the warmth they produce; and tonics may be known by their bitter taste; every thing that is bitter is said to be of a warm nature, and therefore cannot be poison, for all poisons are of a cold nature. Such vegetables as are poisonous, have a cold, sweetish taste, and leave on the glands of the mouth a foul and disagreeable effect.

All vegetables that are astringent, possess more or less a stimulating power, and are useful in proportion to the heat they generate, by exciting the glands. The bayberry root bark possesses this quality in a high degree, and is one of the best things to remove canker that has been discovered. Many things that are used for canker are too drying, and will often do harm, without the aid of some powerful stimulant to excite the glands and make the juices flow freely. The celebrated Peruvian bark is no doubt a powerful astringent, but is very apt to produce bad effects in consequence of its drying nature, which by binding up the juices causes great distress; and is not so good as many vegetables that grow in our own climate.

We have thus far pursued our labours on this important subject, by giving what we conceive to be a sort of key to the inquiry, to enable the reader to

form a correct idea of the best manner of obtaining knowledge by experience, in looking into the vegetable kingdom for all those needful remedies for our complaints, which the God of nature has so abundantly provided for our comfort and health, and which we ought not to be in too much haste to pass by. This subject will be further treated upon hereafter.

ELECTRICITY.

The use of electricity to aid in the removal of disease, was introduced many years ago, in consequence of the discoveries of Franklin; and for a long time was thought to be a discovery of much importance in the medical art; but this, like many other inventions, that prove to be much more beautiful in theory than useful in practice, has had its day and been laid aside. The way it used to be applied was to communicate as heavy a shock as it was thought the patient could bear. The object seemed to be to add vigour to the system, by increasing the circulation; but the effect was momentary and was found to do little or no good.

Dr. Thomas Brown of Albany has made some improvements in the electrical machine, by which the operator has complete control over the power of the electricity, and can communicate it to any part of the body, without giving a sudden shock, and can continue the effect for any length of time. This no doubt is a valuable improvement, and may be made useful, aided by proper medicine, in removing obstructions and adding power to the inward or vital heat. Mr. Jesse Everett of New York, and some other of Dr. Thomson's agents, have used this machine for a considerable time, in conjunction with the Thomsonian system of practice, and with very good success. Although we have had very little experience in its use, yet from the information received from others, and being convinced that it can do no harm, would recommend the trial of it in all cases where there is any chance of its being beneficial.

SUCCESS OF THE THOMSONIAN PRACTICE.

Notwithstanding the opposition and the terrible accounts published of the fatality said to be caused by the Thomson quacks, the practice is gaining friends rapidly in all parts of the United States; wherever it is introduced, the people hail it as a deliverance from a great evil; and many of the most respectable class of society become zealous advocates, using their influence in extending a knowledge of the system, and increasing the practice among the people.

We have before us a letter from a respectable member of the Society of Friends, in the state of Ohio, from which we make the following extract, to show the success the practice meets with in that state.

“The Thomsonian System is spreading rapidly and extensively in this state, and arrangements are in progress for extending it further to the West and South. Many persons of the first respectability in this state have become convinced of the superiority of this system, and are advocating the cause with zeal and energy. And if the almost unanimous suffrage of more than eight thousand freemen can make a man honourable, or the cause he advocates respectable, Dr. Thomson’s medical discoveries certainly have very strong claims to respectability. Dr. Thomson’s mode of practice has taken a deep root in this town,* and from the liberal and enlightened course which Horton Howard has, and I trust will continue to pursue, will insure in the course of a few years, its general introduction throughout the whole western country.”

**CAUTION TO PARENTS ON GIVING THEIR CHILDREN POISON
TO KILL WORMS.**

Not long since, in a town in the State of New-Hampshire, a child was taken suddenly sick, after eating bread and milk for breakfast. A doctor was called

* Columbus.

in, who said, that the disorder was caused by worms, and gave a dose of calomel, which threw the child into violent fits, and in a short time the neighbours were called in to see the child die; but after nature had struggled for about one hour against this enemy to life, it caused vomiting, and the child threw up the poison with its breakfast. A dog being by, ate what was vomitted, and died in consequence, in about four hours after. The child got well.

Dr. James Mann, who was Hospital Surgeon to the army of the United States, in the years 1812, 1813; and 1814, relates the following case:—He says a man at Porchester “was bled eight ounces, and within twenty-four hours took one hundred grains of calomel, one hundred grains of jalap, two ounces of castor oil, and four ounces of sulphate of soda.” He adds, “this man died suffocated while walking his room.”

“The history of the art of medicine in all ages, says Dr. Blane, teems with the fanciful influence of superstitious observances, the imaginary virtues of medicines, with nugatory, delusive, inefficient, and capricious practices, fallacious and sophistical reasonings, as to render it little more than a chaos of error, a tissue of deceit, unworthy of admission among the useful arts and liberal pursuits of man.”

INFIRMARY.

It has long been contemplated by the friends of the Thomsonian System of practice in Boston, to establish in this city an Infirmary, where the sick could be attended upon with much more comfort to themselves, and more convenience to those who practice, than can possibly be done in their own houses. That such an establishment would be a great public benefit, there can be not the least doubt; for the manner in which the sick are treated upon our plan, requires that they

should be constantly under the eye of some one well acquainted with the practice. This would be more particularly the case, where the patient is labouring under a chronic complaint; and where the means used to effect a cure, must be continued for a long time, and be attended with much labour.

A committee was appointed by the Friendly Botanic Society in this city, two years ago, to take the subject into consideration, and make the necessary arrangements for effecting the object, if they could procure funds sufficient; or could prevail with some of our wealthy citizens to erect a building suitable for the purpose, for which there should be sufficient surety given to pay a liberal interest. There has nothing as yet, we believe, been done; but we hope the subject will be renewed; and feel confident, that if proper measures are adopted, there would be no obstacle in the way of accomplishing this important and desirable object.

It seems that in the city of New York, they have got the start of us, and have established an Infirmary upon a plan similar to what has only been talked about here; and there is all the prospects of its being attended with complete success. We make the following extracts from the Telescope, a very able paper, printed in that city to support liberal principles, which will give a view of the plan.

“ United States Infirmary, for the treatment of Diseases Generally, by a new and improved method.

“ For many years we have been fully convinced, both from experience and observation, that the present practice of PHYSIC and SURGERY, is not founded on correct and rational principles. The means made use of to restore the sick to health, are not salutary and beneficial; but on the contrary are productive of very pernicious, and not unfrequently fatal effects.

"The Knife, the Lancet, Mercury and other Minerals, are now chiefly relied upon by Physicians and Surgeons, for the removal of almost all diseases incident to the human body; the injurious consequences resulting from such practice, must in a greater or less degree be obvious to all. The unfortunate patient is doomed to undergo the most painful and dangerous operations, and thereby deprived of the use of his limbs or life, his health, time and substance, for the want of such remedies as the God of nature has placed within his reach; and should any, perchance, be cured by the depleting system, or some of the numerous minerals or foreign drugs in use, such violence and injury is done to the constitution, that the unfortunate sufferer is often compelled to drag out a miserable existence.

"Various attempts have been made from time to time by different individuals, to rescue medicine from its present degraded and lamentable state; from various causes, however, their efforts have not been fully crowned with success. But we are now happy to announce to our fellow citizens, that means commensurate with the importance of the subject, have been taken, to introduce a better system of *Medical and Surgical practice*.

"A Lot of Ground has been procured, and a convenient and handsome *Edifice* erected, expressly to carry this object into effect. This Institution, denominated the United States Infirmary, has been founded (from the most disinterested motives) for the *treatment of diseases generally, by a new and improved method*. The remedial sources are chiefly to be derived from the *vegetable kingdom*; believing that the productions of our own country are sufficient to counteract the disorders incident to it."

"Persons in indigent circumstances will be attended gratuitously."



DR. ELIAKIM DARLING,

—Informs his friends and the public, that he still continues to attend upon those who wish for relief in sickness, at their houses; or he will receive patients at his house, No. 52, Salem-Street, formerly No. 21, Back-Street, where he has accommodations for that purpose.

He is authorised to sell Family Rights, and to give the necessary information how to prepare and use the different kinds of Vegetable Medicines secured to Dr. Thomson by patent. Price of a Family Right, \$20. He has for sale, Vegetable Medicine prepared by Dr. Thomson, free from all mineral preparations whatever.

He has also purchased an improved Electrical Machine, and recently received instructions from Mr. Jesse Everett, of New York, upon the plan adopted by Dr. Thomas Brown of Albany, which is recommended by more than one hundred respectable physicians, as a remedy in many cases of disease.

DR. JOHN LOCKE,

Informs his friends and the public, that he is ready to attend upon those who may wish for relief in sickness. He will visit them at their houses, or will receive patients at his house, No. 12, Portland Street, where he has suitable accommodations for that purpose.

He is authorised to sell Family Rights, and to give the necessary information how to prepare and use the different kinds of vegetable medicines secured to Dr. THOMSON by patent.—Price of a Family Right 20 dollars.

He also has for sale all kinds of Botanic Medicine, warranted genuine.

BOOK AND JOB PRINTING,

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(OVER THE POST-OFFICE.)